

# AMERICA'S CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

*As taught by Pastor Ron Baity*

*December 3, 2017*

We have been looking at the life of George Whitefield recently. He and Jonathan Edwards are responsible for the First Great Spiritual Awakening in America.

## I. EDWARDS HAD AN ASSOCIATION WITH GEORGE WHITEFIELD

- A. Whitefield had read a book by Edwards and made it a point to visit him when he came to America.
  1. Edwards invited Whitefield to preach at his church.
  2. Edwards said of Whitefield's preaching: "The congregation was extraordinarily melted... almost the whole assembly being in tears for a great part of the time," including, "Edwards himself."
- B. When Whitefield visited the American colonial town of Northampton, he stayed with Jonathan and Sarah Edwards and their family and stated:
  1. "Felt wonderful satisfaction in being at the house of Mr. Edwards. He is a son himself, and hath also a Daughter of Abraham for his wife."
  2. "A sweeter couple I have not yet seen. Their children were dressed not in silks and satins, but plain, as become the children of those who, in all things, ought to be examples of Christian simplicity."
- C. At the time of his visit with Edwards, Whitefield was a single person and was impressed with the Godliness of Mrs. Edwards when he stated:
  1. "She is a woman adorned with a meek and quiet spirit, talked feelingly and solidly of the things of God, and seemed to be such a help-meet for her husband, that she caused me to renew those prayers, which, for some months, I have put up to God, that he would be pleased to send me a Daughter of Abraham to be my wife."
  2. "I find, upon many accounts, it is my duty to marry. Lord I desire to have no choice of my own. Thou knowest my circumstances; thou knowest I only desire to marry in and for thee.  
  
"Thou didst choose a Rebecca for Isaac, choose one for me to be a help-meet for me, in carrying on that great work committed to my charge. Lord, hear me, Lord, let my cry come unto thee."

## II. THE BRILLIANCE OF JONATHAN EDWARDS

- A. Edwards had one of the most brilliant minds in American History.

- B. Edwards entered Yale at the age of 12 and graduated three years later as the head of his class.
- C. It was not unusual for Edwards to study 13 hours per day.
- D. Edwards returned to Yale as a tutor for two years in 1724.
- E. Edwards became the third president of Princeton in 1758.

### III. THE PREACHING OF JONATHAN EDWARDS

- A. Edwards usually read his sermons in a monotone voice.
- B. His eyesight was so bad that he usually had to put his face close down to a sermon manuscript in order to read it.
- C. Edwards most famous sermon was entitled "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."
  - 1. He delivered this sermon in Enfield, Connecticut, on July 8, 1741.
  - 2. He delivered this sermon in three parts:
    - a. In the first part he takes as his text Deuteronomy 32:35— "Their foot shall slide in due time." He uses this image as a metaphor for people risking their lives by walking on the slippery slope of sin. (Corrupt sinners face a fearful judgment.).
    - b. In the second part of his sermon, Edwards makes ten interrelated points about God, sin, and religion. He argues that men live and die at the mercy of God and, in the end, it is God alone who decides whether a man goes to Heaven or Hell. He states that time is short for the unrepentant sinner and "that God... dangles you over the precipice much as one would dangle a spider over a flame."
    - c. In the third and longest part of his sermon, Edwards directly addresses the sinners in his congregation and beyond. He describes the fires of Hell, speaking metaphorically of pits of flame and lakes of brimstone. He states that it is only God's mercy that gives them another chance to repent. He reminds them that, until they change their ways, they are all "sinners in the hands of an angry God."
  - 3. The results were not due to his oratorical skill or the great content of the message, but the manifested power of God in answer to prayer.
  - 4. Pratten records: "The effect was awesome; people screamed aloud, clutched the backs of pews and the stone pillars of the church, lest the ground open and swallow them alive into hell!"

- D. Edwards inherited his grandfather's church.
1. He described the church as being so dead that it was like "dry bones."
  2. Some of Edwards' sermons began to penetrate the "Dry Bones" of his church.
    - a. By December 1734, half a dozen of his congregation had repented.
    - b. One girl who had been a "bold flirt" was converted.
      - i. As a result, other became concerned.
      - ii. Many turned to Christ.
  3. Souls began to come as it were "by flocks to Jesus."
    - a. About 300 people were saved in six months.
    - b. A "great and earnest concern" about eternity and spiritual things gripped all social classes and ages.
- E. Edwards stated that in the "Spring and summer following 1735 the town seemed to be full of the presence of God as it never was so full of love, nor so full of joy, and yet so full of distress as it was then... Our public assemblies were then beautiful; the congregation was alive in God's service, every one earnestly intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister...the assembly from time to time in tears while the Word was preached; some weeping with joy and distress, other with joy and love—still others in pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors."
- F. According to historian Williston Walker, this was the beginning of the "most far-reaching and transforming event of the eighteenth-century religious life of America."
- G. Wesley read Edwards account of these events and wrote: "Surely this is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes."
1. This great movement spread throughout many colonies affecting over 100 towns.
  2. This movement affected not only towns and cities, but homes as well.

#### IV. GOD USED WHITEFIELD AND EDWARDS TO PREPARE THE WAY FOR OTHERS

- A. The colonies were greatly affected.
- B. A man by the name of Gilbert Tennant preached with such power that one minister described the effects of those listening: "Great numbers cried aloud in the anguish of their souls. Several stout men fell as though a cannon had been discharged and a ball made its way through their hearts."
- C. By 1743, the revival had spread into the South.

- D. This movement of God even reached the Indians through Edwards' son-in-law, David Brainerd.
- E. Here are two important points:
  1. This First Great Awakening paved the way for American Independence. John Adams stated that preaching was the reason for the Declaration.
  2. The good news is that thousands were saved and added to the church!